

INFORMATION REPORT

~~SECRET~~
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CD NO.

COUNTRY Venezuela

DATE DISTR. 23 MAY 1941

SUBJECT Personal Opinions of Lt. Col. Roberto Casanova

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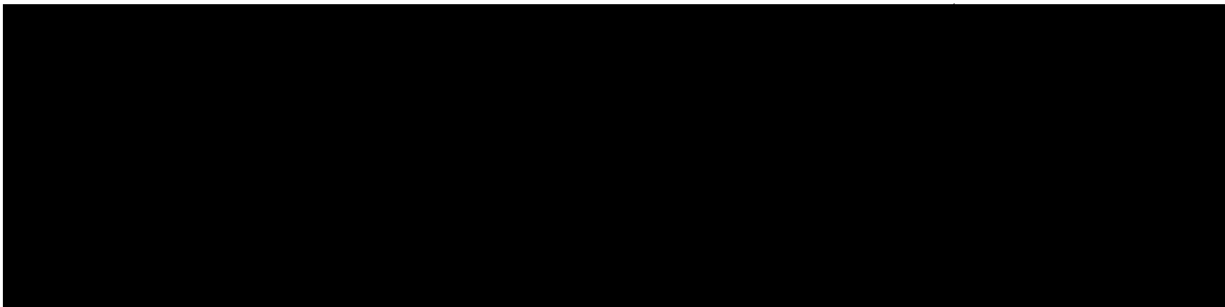
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SUPPLEMENT TO REPORT NO.

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1. In the course of a conversation Lt. Col. Roberto Casanova, Commandant of the Lake Maracaibo area, stated that his recent trip to Caracas had left him with a definite impression of stability in the Venezuelan Military Junta. He said there was no talk of any immediate changes, and he did not expect any for at least four to six months. Lt. Col. Carlos Delgado Chalbaud, President of the Junta, and Lt. Col. Marcos Perez Jimenez, Minister of National Defense, are running things, and it seems to make no difference which one sits in the driver's seat.
2. Concerning the recent disciplining of Major Tomas Mendoza who was arrested and held for questioning in connection with a subversive plot against the government, the colonel confirmed Mendoza's complicity in the plot with President Enriquez Perez Dupuy of the Banco Venezolano de Credito and President Angel Alamo Ibarra of the Club Venezuela. He added, however, that these men would stoop to anything to create a political situation whereby they could make a little money, but that Mendoza was really a sound soldier with no divisionist or revolutionary ideas of his own. It is understood that he is being reassigned to an outlying territory.
3. Casanova reveals that the military is keeping itself informed about secret labor union procedures by means of plain-clothes men who infiltrate important syndicate meetings. He stated that the military had practically nominated the new directors of the former Accion Democratica syndicates, a statement which confirms earlier reports.
4. The colonel stated that Betancourt's recent statements at Lake Success were just another attempt on his part to discredit the present military government in Venezuela. He said that federal prisons have been thrown open to newspaper reporters for inspection, and that he considered the estimate of the total number of political prisoners in the country, which the press set at 190, to be reasonable. This figure, he said, had been reached after reporters of a newspaper unsympathetic to the present government had made a survey of all prisons and should therefore be accurate or, if anything, an overstatement. He does not believe that any government official knows the exact number of political prisoners, but he states that he knew of twelve in the Lake Maracaibo area, five of whom are considered dangerous and will be held indefinitely, whereas the other seven are at present up for trial. He added that political prisoners are being released every day.

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